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SUBJECT: TAWAFUQ LEAVES DOOR OPEN FOR RETURN TO GOVERNMENT

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (C) SUMMARY: Vice President Tarik Hashimi defended the August 1 Tawafuq decision to withdraw its six Ministers from government. The action was designed to shock the government and rebuild Tawafuq's shattered political base which questioned continued participation in the political process absent any tangible results, especially in the key areas of security and detainees, said Hashimi. Hashimi left open the possibility that Tawafuq could rejoin the government if PM Maliki took steps to implement the political agenda that formed the basis of the current unity government fifteen months ago. In the meantime, VP Hashimi would continue working in the 3 plus 1 leadership construct to try and hammer out a political agreement on key benchmark, security and government partnership issues. Hashimi complained about what he termed broken U.S. promises to release the bulk of Coalition detainees by the end of 2006. Ambassador Crocker reproached Hashimi for withdrawing from the political process at a critical time and wondered whether political progress was possible in the current poisoned environment. End Summary.

Tawafuq will Remain in the Political Process

[¶2.](#) (C) In a meeting with Amb. Crocker on August 1, an edgy Vice President Tarik al-Hashimi said that Tawafuq could not remain part of the Maliki government but will continue in the political process through the 3 plus 1 leadership group and in the Council of Representatives. He said he would remain in the post of Vice President for the time being unless there was no response to the political agenda in the leadership meetings.

Need to Shock the Government and Restore Base

[¶3.](#) (C) Saying there had to be a shock to the government and that the move would restore popular support for Tawafuq, Hashimi dismissed as disingenuous the last minute attempts by President Talabani and PM Maliki to address some of the Tawafuq concerns and avert the walkout saying if Maliki really wanted to avert the crisis, he would not have waited seven days and would have called Hashimi himself. Besides, Maliki threatened violence against Tawafuq in his public statement and told Planning Minister Ali Baban on two occasions that he could not guarantee the reaction of people if Tawafuq walked out of government, said Hashimi.

[¶3.](#) (C) Ambassador Crocker replied that both sides made inflammatory statements and that the timing of Tawafuq's move shows that it does not have a serious desire for discussions. All parties are at fault, continued the Ambassador, and must accept responsibility for the outcome. We need to be able to demonstrate in September that there is an Iraqi government seriously dealing with the issues, he continued. Special Assistant to the President Meghan O'Sullivan added that the current military successes must be followed up with political

dialogue. The crisis that Tawafuq had caused in the last several weeks has diverted everyone's attention from the serious political issues at hand. The resulting negative political climate will make the job that much more difficult. You are stepping back from political participation at a time when you should be increasing it, concluded Amb. Crocker.

¶4. (C) Hashimi firmly rejected the charges saying that the eleven Tawafuq proposals in their July 25 ultimatum were constructive and, outlining the numerous previous attempts to reach compromise with the Maliki government on these issues, asked rhetorically, "what else can I do?" The country is going in the wrong direction, he asserted, and it must change course. The door is open for a Tawafuq return to the government if PM Maliki takes steps to address the political agenda that was agreed to when the government was formed 15 months ago, he added.

Promises on Detainees Unfulfilled

¶5. (C) Stating, "we have problems with you too", an aggressive Hashimi charged that the U.S. had violated an agreement to release most prisoners in Coalition custody by the end of 2006. He claimed that in the process of forming the national unity government in June 2006, Ambassador Khalilzad and General Casey promised to release 2,500 Sunnis from MNF-I custody followed by 1,500 per month thereafter - essentially clearing out Camp Bucca except for serious security cases. PM Maliki stopped the releases after the first tranche, claiming the released Sunnis were terrorists.

¶6. (C) The Ambassador pushed back saying that he had no record of such an agreement. People were being detained for

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good reason and kept only if they posed a security risk to Coalition forces, he added. All detainee cases are reviewed within 90 days and every four months thereafter explained the Ambassador. Hashimi angrily challenged this stating that he had seen some files which contain no information about the reason for detention. There are thousands like that, he claimed. The rehabilitation process which was proposed for the detainees is proceeding too slowly, he added. Unwarranted detentions subject detainees to extremist influences said Hashimi and "if you are satisfied with this system, keep it for your shame and suffer the consequences". The U.S. should release the elderly and the handicapped, said Hashimi.

Baghdad Security Plan Biased

¶7. (C) We are not happy with the Baghdad Security Plan said Hashimi, both in terms of operations and intelligence. He claimed that the plan is directed only against Sunni areas, and Sunni intelligence on terrorists in Shi'a areas was not followed up. We cannot agree to a continuation of the current operations, he said.

Advisors to Resolve Issues Prior to Leadership Meeting

¶8. (C) Turning to the 3 plus 1 leadership process, Hashimi said the advisors are making good progress and should continue working. They should discuss and attempt to resolve each and every item on the agenda prior to the leadership meeting leaving only the unresolved items for the leaders to review.

¶9. (C) Comment: Tarik Hashimi, usually polite and mild-mannered in his meetings, was notably confident in defending the Tawafuq decision to leave the Maliki government, as if he was relieved that a burden had been lifted. He was unusually aggressive in his criticism of Coalition detention policies and dismissive of the frantic

last minute efforts by President Talabani to avert the walk-out. The degree to which the Tawafuq walk-out will exacerbate the already bad political climate remains to be seen. If there is no over-reaction by PM Maliki (e.g. by firing Sunnis in sub-cabinet positions or announcing security investigations of Tawafuq leaders), the ongoing 3 plus 1 leadership process might be nurtured to help restore some confidence and cooperation. However, the parties could damage the prospects for political progress in the context of a leadership meeting if their attention strays in the coming weeks to forging a new anti-Maliki coalition. End Comment.

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